Executive Proclamation
State of South Dakota
Office of the Governor

Whereas, In May 1939, professional actor and director Josef Meier established a permanent home for the touring company of the theatrical drama, The Passion Play, in Spearfish, South Dakota; and,

Whereas, The Black Hills Passion Play boasts the longest outdoor stage in the United States and a state-of-the-art amphitheatre seating 6,000 people to view the classical drama portraying the last seven days of the life of Christ; and,

Whereas, The Passion Play continued to tour more than 650 cities in the United States and Canada, and played in a second amphitheatre in Lake Wales, Florida, during the winter seasons of 1953 to 1998; and,

Whereas, The Black Hills Passion Play ensemble has performed the play to audiences totaling nearly 11 million people; and,

Whereas, Josef Meier, individually, received numerous tourism, citizenship, and state awards, including the South Dakota Hall of Fame, the Governor's Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts, Tourism's Ben Black Elk Award, and was named a Black Hills Tourism Pioneer; and,

Whereas, After the retirement of actors and producers Josef and Clare Meier in 1991, daughter Johanna Meier and husband Guido Della Vecchia continued the stage production and the business enterprise of the Black Hills Passion Play; and,

Whereas, The Black Hills Passion Play was acknowledged by three Popes, featured in the *Saturday Evening Post*, received a National Freedom Foundation Medal, and was honored with an Institute of Outdoor Drama Lifetime Achievement Award; and,

Whereas, Sunday, August 31, 2008, concludes a 69-year run for the world famous Black Hills Passion Play and business venture, which has prevailed for nearly seven decades as one of South Dakota's legacy visitor attractions:

Now, Therefore, I, M. Michael Rounds, Governor of the state of South Dakota, do hereby proclaim August 31, 2008, as

BLACK HILLS PASSION PLAY DAY

in South Dakota.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the state of South Dakota, in Pierre, the Capital City, this Twenty-ninth Day of August in the Year of Our Lord, Two Thousand and Eight.

M. Michael Rounds, Governor

Attest:

Teresa J. Bray, Deputy
Chris Nelson, Secretary of State